

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Sabden, Clitheroe

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119651

Headteacher: Mrs C M Bradley

Reporting inspector: Mrs L J Traves
24029

Dates of inspection: 31st March – 2nd April 2003

Inspection number: 248045

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Watt Street Sabden Nr. Clitheroe Lancashire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father P Birmingham
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
24039	Mrs L Traves	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage English Information and communication technology Geography History Physical Education	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning The quality and range of opportunities for learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
8988	Dr J Cross	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
23887	Mr P Nettleship	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Art and design Design technology Music Educational inclusion Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is situated in the village of Sabden, near Clitheroe, on the side of Pendle Hill. Despite its rural location, there is a significant amount of light industry nearby and the school is not too far from the larger industrial town of Burnley. As some pupils come from reasonably far afield, the school serves a mixed area. It is much smaller than most primary schools, with 48 pupils on roll, aged between 4 and 11. These are mainly white and speak English as their first language. Pupils are taught in two mixed age classes, one which caters for pupils from Reception to Year 2 and the other which caters for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The headteacher and a part time member of staff share the reception and infant class, with the head teaching the morning sessions. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal (2 per cent) is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (40 per cent) is well above average. Most of these have learning difficulties. There are 4 pupils who have statements. On entry to school, children's attainments vary greatly from year to year and within each year group. The school has won two prestigious awards: one for its good achievements in the 2001 tests and the other for effective teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, which has forged extremely strong links with parents, its parish and the local community. It creates a very caring, family atmosphere in which children feel valued and in turn learn to respect and value others. The teaching is good and as a result, pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning and achieve well. The school is led and managed very effectively by the headteacher. Together with staff and governors, she works with great commitment and purpose to provide a high standard of education and care for the pupils. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- It is very well led and managed by the headteacher, who is strongly supported by staff and governors;
- It creates a caring, family atmosphere in which pupils are valued and respected and in turn, learn to respect and value themselves and others;
- It has forged strong links with parents, the parish and the local community;
- It provides a very high standard of care for its pupils and is committed to including all of them in its work;
- It provides very well for pupils with special educational needs;
- The teaching is good and enables pupils of all abilities to achieve well and develop very positive attitudes to learning.

What could be improved

- Some aspects of provision for pupils in the reception year;
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation of work are not as good as they could be.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has shown a very good rate of improvement since it was last inspected in January 1998. A significant factor in this improvement has been the move to the new building in 2000. It has enabled great strides to be made in developing the curriculum and improving teaching and learning. Standards in physical education, design and technology and geography have improved and pupils now make good progress in English and mathematics. Pupils also make better progress in science because teachers are more skilled in this area and provide many more opportunities for investigation and experimentation. Much better use is made of the information collected on pupils' progress to identify the next steps in their learning. The curriculum is planned in greater detail and enables pupils to build more effectively on

their knowledge and skills from year to year. The work of the school is now monitored rigorously and this enables standards to be maintained and improved. There is better provision for the youngest pupils, although some aspects could be further improved. There is also still room for further improvement in handwriting and presentation of work. The school has also worked hard to maintain and improve on the areas of strength identified last time. Very good use has been made of partnerships with the local 'small schools cluster group' and Beacon schools to help bring about improvements.

STANDARDS

When there are 10 or fewer pupils in a year group, statistical data is not reliable and it is therefore not included. In the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes this is the case.

When pupils enter the reception class, their attainments vary widely. In some year groups there is a high percentage of pupils who have special educational needs. For example, three quarters of the current Year 6 class are on the school's special needs register. Their attainment in English and mathematics, overall, is below average. However, the school's records and inspection judgements show that most pupils achieve well and sometimes very well, over their time in the school, in relation to their previous attainment. Pupils who make slower progress have often joined the school part way through and have had interruptions to their learning. The school sets itself appropriately challenging targets based on the good quality tracking of pupils' progress and is successful in meeting these.

Pupils in both the infant and junior classes make good progress in English and mathematics. They do particularly well in reading, although progress in writing and spelling is accelerating because of the emphasis the school has placed on these areas. However, progress in handwriting is not as sharp and many pupils could achieve more in this area. Pupils also achieve well in mathematics. Skills in mental arithmetic are particularly strong and younger pupils often benefit from the challenge of being taught with older pupils, particularly in the junior class. Most junior pupils are adept at using their knowledge to solve problems and explain how they worked things out. In science, pupils achieve well because they often learn through investigation, which enables them to think scientifically. In other subjects, pupils' achieve standards that are broadly similar to those found in most schools. In music at Key Stage 1, and in swimming at both key stages, standards are higher than usually found.

Most children in the current reception class are likely to do better than expected for pupils of this age in their personal and social development, reading, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the year. Some are already working at the early stages of the National Curriculum in some areas. In the other areas of learning they are on course to do as well as expected.

The school gives very effective support to pupils with special educational needs. This enables them to cope well with their work and make good progress. Those pupils identified as having particular gifts or talents achieve well because they are also well provided for. Boys and girls make similar progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the school and enjoy their work. They are very keen to take part in lessons and the other activities on offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The great majority of pupils behave well in class and on all other occasions. They work and play together well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships with teachers and with other children are very strong. Pupils grow to be mature and sensible. They take good care of each other and are mindful of others' needs.

Attendance	Well above average. As a result, pupils gain maximum benefit from school.
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Pupils say that their school is very good and they will be sorry to leave it. There are a small number of younger pupils who find it hard to be on their best behaviour all the time. This occasionally affects their concentration. It is sensitively managed to cause minimum disruption to learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers know their pupils very well because they spend several years with the same class and as a result, relationships are very strong. A strength of teaching is the skill with which teachers plan work at the right level of challenge for the wide range of abilities and age groups within their classes. This helps pupils to make good progress in the great majority of lessons and throughout their time in the school. Pupils get off to a good start, overall, in reception. However, very occasionally, during the inspection, the teaching of these pupils was satisfactory, rather than good. This was because the teacher's time during tasks was more strongly focused on the older pupils who share the same class and consequently, the progress of the youngest pupils was occasionally slower.

Literacy and numeracy are taught well throughout the school. The teaching of reading is particularly strong. Pupils in the reception and infant class develop their skills at a good rate because letter sounds and patterns are taught systematically. In the junior class, the teacher develops pupils' reading strategies rapidly. More attention could be paid, however, to developing pupils' handwriting skills. In numeracy lessons, pupils develop their mental agility well and apply their knowledge of numbers effectively. Good attention is given, overall, to developing pupils' investigative skills in both mathematics and science. Teachers work hard at providing interesting, practical activities for pupils in all subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because work is adapted to meet their needs and they have very good quality extra help during most lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, overall. The school achieves a good balance between ensuring the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and providing a wide range of activities to enrich their learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Their needs are carefully targeted and they receive high quality support from assistants who are skilled and understand their needs very well. They play an important part in developing their confidence as well as their skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school teaches pupils to be aware of the needs of others and respect them. It gives them very good opportunities to reflect on life's important issues. They learn about their own culture and their place in their local community. However, the school could do more to prepare them for life in a multicultural society.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Teachers are very sensitive to pupils' individual needs. There are very good procedures in place for ensuring pupils' welfare and their learning is monitored effectively. The school has effective procedures for promoting racial harmony.
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The curriculum is enriched through a good range of visits to places in the local area and further afield and also through visitors to school. On occasions, opportunities for reception pupils to choose their own activities and explore and investigate both inside and outdoors are limited because they are part of the class containing older pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is very dedicated and sets extremely high standards for herself. This sets the tone for the rest of the school. She manages to combine a heavy teaching load with her management duties very effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. They are an active and committed group who share the headteacher's clear ideas of how the school should be. They provide very strong support, but also act as a critical friend to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school identifies the right priorities for development and takes effective action to address these. It is constantly seeking ways to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are deployed well and the budget managed prudently to support the school's educational priorities.

The new building provides a high quality environment for teaching and learning. The school applies the principles of best value well through checking on its own performance, monitoring spending and taking account of parents' views.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school; • The school is very well led and managed; • It works closely with them; • They feel very comfortable approaching the school; • It helps their children become mature and sensible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The homework children receive; • The range of activities outside lessons. <p>(These relate to a very small number of parents)</p>

The parents are strongly supportive of the school. Inspectors agree with the parents' very positive comments. However the inspection team judges that the amount of homework and the range of activities outside lessons are similar to those found in many primary schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Caution must be used in comparing standards in the national tests because of the small number of pupils in each year group. For example, there were only 7 pupils in each of the Year 2 and Year 6 groups last year. It is therefore unrealistic to compare the performance of pupils at St. Mary's with that of other schools, because one child may count for 14 per cent or more. Analysis is made even more complex by the varying numbers of pupils with special educational needs in each year group. Also, children often join the school part way through and this sometimes affects the progress they make. A significant number of these pupils have had problems in other schools and their education has been disrupted. The school's records clearly show that those pupils who have been at the school since the beginning of their reception year generally do better than those who join later, despite the school's best efforts. A close analysis of results over time shows that in years when the Year 2 and Year 6 groups have not contained such high percentages of pupils with special educational needs and have been more stable, pupils have achieved particularly well in the national tests. In the current Year 6 group, three out of the four pupils are identified as having special educational needs. Inspection findings indicate that standards for these pupils are below average in English, mathematics and science. The current Year 2 group also has a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs. Standards for these pupils are average in reading and writing and slightly below average in mathematics.
2. There have been improvements in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection and pupils now achieve well in relation to their abilities and sometimes very well. When pupils' attainments in the national tests over time are examined, the overall trend has been one of improvement in all three subjects and has been above the national trend in English and mathematics. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and there has been a much greater focus on raising standards. The effective implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and the increased opportunities for investigation in science have had a strong impact on both teaching and learning. Better use has also been made of assessments to identify what needs to be taught next. Close attention is paid to pupils' individual progress. Measures are quickly put into place to remedy any underachievement and those who are more able or talented are well provided for. These measures have proved successful in ensuring that pupils achieve well.
3. Higher standards in other subjects have also been reached since the last inspection. The move to a new building has ensured that the requirements for physical education are now fully met. Standards are now typical of those in most schools in gymnastics at Key Stage 1 and above those in swimming at both key stages. It was not possible to judge standards in physical education at Key Stage 2 because no lessons were seen. However, the teacher's planning shows that all elements are covered over the year and pupils can now build progressively on their skills. Standards in design and technology and geography at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved and are now broadly in line with what is expected for pupils of this age. Pupils' now develop appropriate skills in all areas of design and technology and are given good opportunities to work with a wide range of tools and materials. In geography, pupils' mapping skills are now well developed and they have a good knowledge of their own locality and places further afield. At Key Stage 1, standards

in music are better than those seen in most schools. Pupils have a rich range of opportunities for learning in all elements of the subject.

4. Children make good progress in reception. They make a positive start in learning literacy and numeracy skills, such as letter sounds and counting. The current reception children are on course to exceed the expected standards in their personal development, reading, mathematics and their knowledge and understanding of the world. In writing, physical and creative development, they are likely to meet expectations for children of this age.
5. Pupils achieve well in English. In speaking and listening, they follow instructions well and respond well to encouragement to express their ideas. Most pupils are attentive listeners who know what they are expected to learn. Reading skills are taught effectively from the earliest stages. By 7, almost all pupils are fluent readers and by the age of 11 read with enjoyment and good understanding, including those who have difficulties. Many parents play an important part in this process by ensuring that they read with their children regularly. A number of measures have been implemented fairly recently to improve pupils' writing. Staff have had training to enable them to teach writing more effectively. This is starting to have an impact on pupils' progress and closing the gap between reading and writing standards. However, reception pupils could have more opportunities to explore writing for themselves. Throughout the school, standards in handwriting could be higher. Not enough attention is always paid to ensuring that pupils form their letters correctly and present their work neatly.
6. Pupils also achieve well in mathematics. They become quick and accurate with mental calculations, and apply their skills effectively through tackling mathematical problems in written form. Their skills and understanding of shapes and handling data also develop appropriately. A range of opportunities is provided for practical, 'hands on' work through other subjects, such as science and design technology (DT). However, more opportunities for 'open-ended' investigations could sometimes be provided for older juniors.
7. Good progress is made in science and, by the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils reach the standard expected and those who are capable exceed this. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be below average at Key Stage 2 and progress was judged to be unsatisfactory. Pupils plan experiments and have many interesting opportunities to explore and investigate. They draw sensible conclusions from their experiments.
8. Standards in information and communication technology are similar to those found in most schools, at the end of both key stages. This is similar to the time of the last inspection. The school has kept pace with improvements nationally. Staff training, improved resources and the development of the use of computers in other subjects are having a good impact and are accelerating progress.
9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their learning needs are accurately and quickly identified. Very specific, achievable targets are set for them and their progress towards these is carefully and regularly assessed. They are supported very well by all the adults who work with them. They have very good relationships with the support staff and this develops their confidence and self-esteem, as well as helping them learn effectively. As a result, they play a full part in the life of the school and achieve well in relation to their abilities. Pupils with particular talents or who are academically very able are well catered for by allowing

them to work alongside older pupils in the same class. As a result, they often reach high standards in their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. These aspects are even stronger than at the time of the last inspection and create an environment in school and in the playground where everyone is treated with kindness, love and total respect. This helps pupils to feel good about themselves and about others, and enables everyone to succeed. The pupils are very well motivated and justifiably proud of their achievements and their school.
11. Parents are in no doubt that their children enjoy school and are happy at work and at play. Right from the outset, pupils in the reception year, and those who join the school at other times are successfully embraced into their mixed-age classes and the whole school family. This is due to the very good relationships that exist throughout the school, the care shown instinctively by older pupils for younger ones and the consummate respect shown by everyone for others. Parents and governors said that they particularly value the way that pupils with special educational needs are 'accepted just as they are' in the strongly nurturing 'can do' climate.
12. Pupils in reception learn how to respond positively from the good example set by older children and the staff. They try hard to listen and follow instructions, to concentrate on their learning and work co-operatively. Teachers and support assistants actively encourage the pupils, sometimes by negotiating simple targets with them. These help the pupils to comply and make faster progress by striving to meet the challenges. Reception children are also spurred on by observing the achievement of older classmates, as seen in a gymnastics lesson when Key Stage 1 pupils demonstrated their skills in balancing and climbing. This display helped reception pupils to feel confident enough to have a go themselves using large apparatus for the first time.
13. Pupils in both key stages have very positive attitudes towards their work. They are enthusiastic learners who are very good at organising themselves without fuss and getting on well with their work, whether independently or collaboratively. They generally behave well in lessons, which usually enables everyone to concentrate on their learning. A small number of boys in Year 1, however, are sometimes giddy and their challenging behaviour is very occasionally distracting for others, although it is very well managed to minimise the effects.
14. In the playground, pupils are friendly and play amicably. Older and younger pupils, boys and girls, mix freely and enjoy sharing equipment such as skipping ropes and skittles. Bikes and scooters are sometimes made available for the younger children, who give whoops of delight as they freewheel or race down the slope. A particularly noteworthy feature is the manner in which pupils with special educational needs, including those with profound learning and physical difficulties, are sensitively embraced into these activities. Parents justifiably indicated that standards of behaviour are high and expressed no concerns about bullying or harassment. No one was excluded from the school last year.
15. Past disrespect amongst older pupils for their teacher, reported as a weakness five years ago, is no longer present. Mutual respect within the whole school community is central to establishing the very strong relationships and is the cornerstone of the pupils' strong personal development. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for helping staff and one another and are thoughtful, caring and considerate. They are quick to

celebrate the successes of their peers and others. Their sportsmanship, for example, has won them awards for fair play in inter-school football matches.

16. Attendance is very good, being well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is minimal. Pupils generally arrive punctually but a small number of pupils are persistently late. These latecomers sometimes miss important messages and disturb the worship or work of others.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching is good throughout the school. It has improved since the last inspection. The unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated and there was more good teaching observed this time. Teaching in the Foundation Stage (reception) has improved from being satisfactory last time to being good, overall. There have also been particular improvements in the teaching of design and technology, aspects of physical education and geography. Pupils throughout the school now make good progress as a result of the improved teaching picture. The staff have worked extremely hard since the last inspection to develop their skills, confidence and subject expertise. Weaknesses in teachers' planning, subject knowledge and the challenge for all pupils, which were previously identified as issues, have been successfully ironed out.
18. In the Foundation Stage, there are strengths in the teaching of personal, social and emotional development, which enable children to make a positive start to their school life. Pupils are managed particularly well and relationships are very strong. This ensures they feel happy, confident and secure. Reading is also taught particularly effectively and as a result, all pupils make rapid progress in understanding letter sounds, recognising key words and reading small books independently. Early number skills are also taught systematically and effectively. This helps children to develop confidence, for example, with recognising numbers, counting and undertaking simple addition and subtraction. An appropriate range of activities is planned for in almost all areas of learning. Many of these are practical and give at least sound and sometimes good opportunities for pupils to explore and investigate for themselves. However, in creative and physical development, the balance between activities directed by staff and those the children choose to explore themselves could sometimes be improved. On the few occasions where teaching was more ordinary, it was largely related to the balance between the time the pupils spent with the teacher and with support staff for part of the lesson. On occasions, the teacher spent the bulk of the time with the older pupils, when undertaking tasks. Although support staff are skilled and knowledgeable, pupils would benefit occasionally from greater access to the teacher's expertise.
19. All staff are very hard working and strongly committed to providing the best for their pupils. They work together very effectively as a team and this has had a significant impact on both teaching and learning. Relationships at all levels are very strong. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard, help each other and behave well. They value all pupils highly and give them plenty of praise for their efforts and achievements. In return, pupils work hard for their teachers and treat them with respect at all times. This is an improvement since the last inspection when not all of the older pupils were respectful to staff.
20. Teachers plan their lessons very effectively to ensure a good match of work to the widely different abilities of the pupils in the mixed age classes. For example, in the infant class, pupils were given the task of representing their journey between the

school and the local farm in a variety of ways that called for different levels of skill. Most reception pupils were representing the journey in picture form, while Year 1 pupils were drawing a route plan, with pictures to represent key features of the environment. Year 2 pupils were drawing a plan, complete with symbols and a key. Good strategies are used in the junior class, to ensure that all pupils receive the appropriate level of input from the teacher. For example, in a literacy lesson, the older pupils were working on independent tasks as an introduction to the topic they were to study later with the teacher, while the younger pupils were undertaking their shared reading session on the carpet. This ensured that no time was wasted, pupils developed good levels of independence and were challenged at just the right level. Teachers are very clear about what it is they want their pupils to learn. This is explained well to the pupils in most lessons and consequently, pupils are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it. This also develops their independence well, as they get on quickly with their work with the minimum of support.

21. Teachers use questions effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and develop their understanding. For example in a junior history lesson, the teacher asked questions such as, 'What do we have to be careful of when we study history?' This prompted pupils to think hard and come up with the premise that 'We can't be sure what really happened because we weren't there.' As a result, they deepened their understanding of the need for careful research and interpretation in the subject. Teachers' marking is very effective. It is thorough and comprehensive, pointing out areas for improvement and often setting future targets for the pupils. In the best examples, children have written a response to the teacher and subsequent work shows that they have tried to take the comments on board. This increases pupils' knowledge of their own learning.
22. Learning resources are used effectively in most lessons to interest and involve the pupils. In the whole class sections of literacy and numeracy lessons, individual white boards are used for spellings and calculations. This ensures that pupils are involved. The teacher can also quickly assess pupils' understanding. In an infant science lesson, a good range of magnets and magnetic and non-magnetic objects were provided for pupils to test. As a result, they quickly cottoned on to the sorts of materials that were attracted to magnets and those that were not. A science lesson about the parts of flowering plants was brought to life because pupils were given real flowers to dissect, to identify the parts. This made learning facts far more interesting for the pupils.
23. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively throughout the school. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught consistently and these are often consolidated through effective use of related computer programmes. Pupils are given good opportunities to use their literacy skills in other subjects, for example, to write up experiments in science and to write first-hand accounts in history. Good opportunities are provided for research using both books and the Internet. Pupils develop good mental agility and their understanding of number is good. They are given regular opportunities to use their skills to solve problems and undertake practical work. However, on occasions, the investigations they carry out could be more 'open-ended'.
24. A weaker area of teaching is the development of handwriting and presentation skills. These are not taught systematically enough and not enough attention is always given either in lessons, or in teachers' marking as to how pupils present their work.

A scheme has been introduced, very recently. However, its application is not yet systematically embedded and there are inconsistencies in practice.

25. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by both teachers and classroom support assistants. This ensures that they take a full part in all that the school has to offer and make good progress with their learning. The staff know their pupils extremely well and are sensitive to their individual needs. The very good relationships between staff and pupils helps develop confidence and self-esteem. All are jointly involved in the planning, organisation and assessment of the pupils' work and progress. Staff have very good strategies in place for those pupils who have difficulty controlling their behaviour. This ensures that their own learning and that of others is rarely disrupted. Pupils with special talents or abilities are also well supported to maximise their achievement.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

26. The overall quality of the curriculum is good and all statutory requirements are now met. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils experience a broad and interesting range of learning opportunities. They benefit from a well-planned and structured curriculum, which meets their needs and enriches their experience.
27. At the last inspection, overall curriculum planning was judged to be a weaker area. It did not provide well enough for pupils in the mixed age classes to build on their knowledge and skills progressively from year to year. There was no overall plan to ensure that all the National Curriculum programmes of study were covered and as a result, there were gaps in pupils' learning. There was also insufficient guidance in place to support teachers in planning what they should teach and when they should teach it. The accommodation did not allow for satisfactory provision in physical education and as a result, statutory requirements for the subject were not met in full. This is no longer the case. The school now ensures that all aspects of the National Curriculum are taught appropriately and sufficient time is allocated to each subject. The most recent national guidelines have been adopted for almost all subjects and have been adapted to meet the needs of the school. Good account has also been taken of local curriculum guidelines, particularly those relating to small schools and mixed age classes. These are successfully guiding teacher's curriculum planning and delivery of lessons.
28. Very good use has been made of the local small schools' cluster group to share expertise and develop key areas, such as ICT. Staff have worked particularly hard to increase the amount of practical, 'hands on' experiences on offer to pupils. They have been successful in this, making full use of the extra space and better facilities of the new building. As a result, pupils really enjoy their learning and are keen to take part in all the experiences on offer.
29. The curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, overall. It is planned to cover all six areas of learning. The staff work very hard to provide for the needs of these pupils within the mixed age class and are more successful in some areas than others because of the constraints of the situation. In reading, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world, children often benefit from being taught alongside the older pupils. However, the areas of physical and creative learning are not quite as well developed. A lack of dedicated play space, both indoors and out, limits opportunities for children to fully explore and investigate for themselves. Often, work in these areas is limited or closely directed by teachers,

so that the learning for other pupils within the class is not disrupted. The school is aware of this and firm plans are in place to extend the classroom space by adding a veranda area and to provide outdoor climbing and adventurous apparatus.

30. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been fully implemented and adapted to meet the needs of the school. Teachers have recently received training to improve writing and spelling throughout the school and the impact of this can be seen in the pupils' work. National 'catch-up' programmes have also been implemented and are providing good support for those who need extra help, in particular, with English.
31. The school provides good enrichment through visits to places of interest, visitors into school and opportunities to take part in local events. The rich diversity of the local area is used effectively to support pupils' work in science, history and geography. For example, pupils visit the nearby farm and study local features such as Pendle Hill and the local rivers and reservoir. Visits are made further afield, for example to Skipton Castle, the museum at Preston and Blackpool Zoo. Visitors, such as a pupil's grandmother and African drummers come into school to share their skills and experiences with the pupils. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in performances, such as 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat', with all pupils having a role to play. Such experiences add much to pupils' personal development.
32. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers and classroom assistants are very committed to ensuring that these pupils are fully included in all that the school has to offer. They understand the specific needs of individual pupils very well. Consequently, the support they receive is very effective. Individual education plans set precise targets, which break learning down into small, achievable steps. The plans are regularly evaluated and pupils' progress comprehensively monitored. New targets are set, as a result of this. Pupils with particular gifts and talents are identified and their needs are met. For example, in swimming, particularly talented younger pupils are taught alongside older pupils.
33. Personal, social, health education and citizenship are taught effectively. Pupils' learning is successfully enriched by the visit of the Life Bus to school. Some have represented the school at a conference on the dangers of drugs, which has proved beneficial in raising awareness. Sex education is suitably covered in science and in the personal relationships aspect of religious education, in line with Catholic teaching. Circle time activities, where pupils discuss issues that are important to them, are used well to encourage pupils to express their feelings on sensitive issues. Although there is no 'School Council' to allow pupils to be formally involved in influencing the school, their views are sought, welcomed and acted upon where appropriate.
34. The school uses the local community very effectively to broaden pupils' learning and enhance their personal development. Links with the church to which the school is affiliated are very strong. The parish priest, who is chair of governors, takes a very active part in the life of the school. There are weekly religious celebrations attended by the whole school, which gives pupils a very good understanding of their importance in the life of the parish. Pupils are encouraged to 'put something back' into their local community. For example, they visit the elderly in the village and take part in the village events, such as the annual horticultural show. They learn about their village in history and geography and travel further afield into the wider community, for example, to sing at the Guild Hall in Preston. The whole school uses

local swimming facilities and pupils go on visits to the theatre and places of interest in the area. Students from local colleges regularly undertake initial teaching training or work experience in school. The headteacher values their freshness and enthusiasm, which help staff to improve their own provision.

35. The school's very strong links with local Beacon schools, other small primary schools and the local Catholic high school are extremely beneficial. These links enable staff to share good practice in teaching and learning, attend joint training sessions and discuss the curriculum. They prevent the school from becoming insular. A recent initiative centred on sharing staff expertise is successfully enabling the school to increase older pupils' ICT skills. Suitable arrangements are made for the Year 6 pupils to get to know some of the high school teachers and familiarise themselves with the building before they transfer. As a result, parents and staff from the high school report that transition is very smooth.
36. Most aspects of the school's provision to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have improved since the last inspection. Promotion of pupils' spiritual development is very good now, chiefly through the strong Christian ethos, which is fundamental to the work of the school. Whole-school assemblies include daily worship and are joyful, yet tender and reflective occasions. Pupils of all ages are actively encouraged to think about people who particularly need their prayers, and to reflect upon topical issues such as the importance of world peace. Pupils' self-esteem is raised effectively through creating an environment in school within which everyone can thrive and celebrate success. Lessons are planned so that pupils experience wonderment. This was seen when older pupils gasped at the beauty of magnified flower heads in a science lesson and in art when younger ones' eyes opened wide as the teacher explained how sculptures of various animals had been made.
37. Social and moral development are also promoted very strongly through teaching pupils how to behave in an acceptable manner and to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils are suitably encouraged to listen to different viewpoints after arguments or fall-outs and think what could have been done differently to avoid the conflict. Care and consideration for others are actively inculcated through the high emphasis placed upon whole school family togetherness. This happens during worship, playtimes, lunchtime, theatre trips and other educational visits. Older pupils partner younger ones to church and to the swimming baths each week, which helps them to be mindful of the needs of others. Pupils are also encouraged to extend their care and concern to the wider community and to those they do not personally know. They have good links with a residential home for the elderly, for example, and sometimes show initiative by organising charitable fundraising.
38. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is good overall. It is very effective in relation to their own cultural heritage, but less so in relation to that of others. The school helps pupils to develop a strong understanding of their own local culture, through the many opportunities to take part in village life and learn about its traditions and customs. They also experience the cultural heritage of Lancashire as a whole. Pupils have visited Lancaster Castle and a clog-making factory, and have journeyed on a horse drawn canal barge. Performers from several branches of the arts, including an actor in role as a Roman Centurion, have visited the school. Local professional football clubs successfully involve pupils in their community programmes. They study other cultural traditions reasonably effectively through art and music. An African drummer, for example, has enthralled the pupils. Not enough is done, however, to prepare pupils for life in multi-ethnic Britain. Plans are well

underway to link up with a school of greater ethnic diversity and to visit a mosque, which should be beneficial in raising pupils' awareness of other faiths and cultures in this country.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school takes very good care of all its pupils within a strongly nurturing environment of love and respect. This enables all pupils to thrive and is greatly valued by parents. Those parents whose children have special educational needs, some of whom have had experience of other schools, are extremely appreciative of the school's provision.
40. Teachers are very skilled at identifying pupils who are not making the progress expected or who have particular difficulties. Their needs are carefully analysed and, if it will be of benefit to them, they are placed on the SEN register. Half-termly targets are set, by the headteacher and the other staff and clearly identified on the pupils' individual education plans. This ensures that all staff have a very good understanding of the particular needs of each individual and how these needs are to be addressed. The headteacher works extremely hard to ensure that all special needs pupils, including those with statements, get the very best possible deal and are fully included in all that the school has to offer.
41. Staff and governors are very alert to welfare, health and safety issues. They keep abreast of developments through undertaking suitable training. Record keeping is of a high standard. The whole staff undertake annual training in child protection procedures and almost all have recently up-dated their training in basic first aid. Governors play a large part in termly health and safety checks of the premises and in ensuring that fire drills are regularly practised.
42. All staff, including mid-day supervisors, very strongly promote and expect high standards of behaviour. All take a firm, yet fair, positive approach to disciplining the pupils with high emphasis upon explaining why certain behaviour is unacceptable due to its impact upon others. This is very effective in eliminating harassment and bullying. More serious behavioural incidents are suitably recorded. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own conduct and set simple targets, which successfully clarify expectations. Those with the most challenging behaviour are further helped with special plans that set more formal targets for improvement and involve parents. The system of rewards and sanctions is clearly understood by all pupils and they are encouraged to do their very best. Their achievements in this area, as well as in their academic development are celebrated by the whole school in a weekly assembly. The school has an effective policy in place to promote racial harmony.
43. The school's procedures for checking attendance registers and following up absences are very good but more could be done to promote punctuality. The school responds suitably to unexplained absence on the first day by contacting parents who have not been in touch. This is a good safety procedure. The education welfare service is appropriately involved with the very few pupils whose level of absence causes concern, and any improvements are suitably celebrated and rewarded. The time of arrival of latecomers, and reasons for them being late, are not logged. This makes it difficult to assess the cumulative impact upon learning of the few individuals who are persistently late. The school does not officially close the registers until morning break, much longer than the maximum of half an hour

recommended in government circulars. However, during the inspection, this matter was addressed.

44. Comprehensive records are kept of every pupil's personal and social development. These enable staff to inform and involve parents effectively and provide appropriate support. They ensure that any difficulties pupils may be experiencing are not overlooked.
45. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the previous inspection and now good. Each year there is a very thorough analysis of test results for all pupils. Changes to the curriculum, teaching and support and work programmes for pupils are made as a result of areas identified for improvement. This has been a significant factor in raising standards. For example, the school identified spelling as a whole school issue and has put strategies in place to address this, which are now proving successful.
46. Effective use is made of systems to track pupils' progress in English, mathematics science and ICT within each school year and throughout their time in the school. The high quality of the assessment data collected enables the school to set accurate targets for individuals and groups of pupils effectively and provide the right level of support for those who need it; for example through the use of national 'catch up' programmes. Teachers use the information effectively to set work at the appropriate level of challenge to move pupils on quickly to the next stage in their learning. This is ensuring that they make good progress. Pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are recorded against sub levels of the National Curriculum attainment targets. This enables patterns of progress to be identified, projections for future achievement made and whole school targets to be set. The information is recorded in a way which enables teachers to quickly identify how well pupils are doing and whether the progress they are making is fast enough. This allows adjustments to be made, as necessary. Very good use has been made of the shared expertise of the small schools' cluster group in devising a suitable system of assessment to meet the needs of a small school.
47. A computerised system for planning and assessment has recently been introduced. This is in the early stages of implementation, but is starting to provide staff with clear records of pupils' progress in all other curriculum areas.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. The school has further strengthened its links with parents and now enjoys a very successful partnership with them. In return their opinions of the work of the school are overwhelmingly positive. At the heart of this success is parents' absolute trust in the leadership and management of the school, the approachability of the staff when they have concerns, and the very good network of communication between home and school. Parents are delighted with the new building and the family atmosphere of care and mutual respect that is created within it. Views such as these have helped the school to gain its good reputation in the locality, particularly for its provision for pupils with special educational needs.
49. Parents are constantly updated about their children's progress through the excellent, highly personalised, weekly diary reports. Teachers and parents use these diaries extremely effectively as a means of two-way dialogue between home and school. The diaries enable any concerns about academic progress, behaviour or attendance to be shared with ease. They also usefully inform parents about the topics and main

focus of lessons, and ways that they might help their child to learn at home. Parents, particularly those whose children have special educational needs, greatly appreciate the time invested in these diaries by the staff, and the reassurance that this level and quality of information offers.

50. Some parents would like the main formal consultation with teachers about their child's progress to be held in the spring term rather than the summer. The school is giving serious consideration to this suggestion. Children's targets for improvement are suitably shared with parents at these well-attended meetings. Parents also receive appropriate annual written reports on progress. Parents also expressed a desire to attend the weekly celebration assembly and this has already been successfully introduced. This demonstrates the willingness of the staff to listen and suitably respond to parents.
51. The school puts much time into forging close links with parents. They are expected to be fully involved from the first time the school identifies a pupil who may have special educational needs. Parents, as well as their children, have a major contribution to make to all decisions that may affect their child. The parents of those pupils with the greatest needs, who have a statement, are invited to attend all meetings with outside agencies that are brought in to help their children. They can change or add to the individual education plans if they wish. These statements are updated regularly and are reviewed annually to discover how much progress has been made. Parents greatly appreciate the lengths to which the school goes to try to help their children. Most also give extra support, on a regular basis, to enable their children to reach the targets set for them.
52. Parents are welcome to chat informally with the staff at the start and end of the school day and they are actively encouraged to get involved in school life. Reading diaries and workshops about the curriculum successfully encourage them to help their child to learn more effectively at home. The assistance of parents who volunteer their time, experience and skills in school is much appreciated by the staff. Parents, for example, run popular extra-curricular football coaching and organise successful social and fundraising events. The privately run before and after school club was set up as a result of parents working together. This provides a wide range of activities for the children and is highly regarded by parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The leadership and management of the school are very good. This is a much-improved picture from the time of the last inspection. The headteacher gives a very strong steer to the work of the school. As a result, it fulfils its aims very well and continues to move forward. The headteacher works with great energy and commitment in both her teaching and administrative roles, and is an example to all. She is highly respected and very strongly supported by the staff, governors and parents. The headteacher has led all members of the school community in creating a very supportive, welcoming family atmosphere for the pupils. She strongly encourages all pupils and staff to do their best and creates an environment in which this is possible. She has also ensured that the school plays an integral part in the life of the parish and the wider village community. These are the firm foundations on which the school's success is built.
54. The excellent teamwork and dedication of the headteacher, governing body and staff have brought about very good improvement for the benefit of the pupils in many areas of the school's work. For example, the headteacher has ensured her own

management skills have been developed in key areas through undertaking a national qualification for serving headteachers. This has improved her understanding, for example, of how best to evaluate the work of the school and bring about improvement. There are now firmly established systems in place to address this effectively. There is a firm commitment in the school to continuing professional development. Training has been undertaken in key areas identified as issues last time, such as science, and there has been a clear improvement in teaching and learning in the subject. The headteacher has ensured that staff have also kept abreast of developments in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teaching has been rigorously monitored to eliminate unsatisfactory practice and to ensure consistently high standards throughout. The result has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Performance management for staff at all levels has played a key part in developing skills and improving practice. Support staff, for example, have often gone on to take recognised qualifications. The school is working towards the Investors in People Award for its work in this area.

55. Governors have also played a key part in improving the management of the school. They have also worked hard to increase their involvement in setting the direction for the school and monitoring its work, through the various committees and through regular monitoring visits. As a result, they are able to make key decisions based on firm evidence. For example, they recognise the need for the headteacher, in her role as special educational needs co-ordinator, to have dedicated release time for this purpose. Governors have also taken on board the recommendations from the last inspection for the headteacher to have more release time to carry out her management role more effectively. As a result, they have ensured that funds are available to provide adequate release time for the headteacher, on a weekly basis. This is enabling her to undertake valuable development work and keep on top of the administration tasks. They consider this to be money well spent as they have seen the improvements in the school at many levels. However, they are aware that the headteacher and staff continue to spend much of their own time on school work and constantly examine ways to provide further support.
56. The headteacher has recognised the need, in the context of a small school, to look outwards and guard against becoming insular. Consequently, she has drawn in and effectively used expertise from the local education authority, from educational consultants and from other schools in the drive towards improved standards. Very good use is made of the local small schools' cluster group for assistance with monitoring, curriculum development and aspects of management. The head has also recognised that, given her many other commitments, aspects of school management need to be delegated to others. To this end she has ensured that governors and staff have received support to enable responsibilities to be shared effectively. A good example of this is the role the governing body is now taking in developing appropriate health and safety procedures and monitoring their effectiveness. The headteacher has worked alongside the other staff, in their roles as curriculum co-ordinators, in developing systems for monitoring planning, analysing pupils' work and identifying key areas for improvement. Staff have benefited greatly from her expertise and the full time teacher is now confident enough to monitor the headteacher's lessons. As a result, subjects are effectively led and managed and are developing well.
57. In her role as the special educational needs co-ordinator, the headteacher provides very good leadership and management. She is highly commitment to providing the best for these pupils. She works tirelessly to seek expert advice from wherever it

may be available in order that individual pupils' needs are identified and the best possible support provided for them. As a result, pupils with profound needs are able to attend the school and to benefit from its high levels of care. Very close links are maintained with outside agencies and with parents. When pupils move on, good liaison between the schools involved allow smooth transfers to be made. New technology is being increasingly well used for administrative duties and target setting. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs plays an active role in liaising with the headteacher and ensuring governors are well informed about the quality of support provided and what might be needed in the future. This enables the governing body to make strategic decisions; for example, about the number of classroom support assistant hours that need to be budgeted for.

58. The governing body gives very good support to the school and has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Their main aim is to provide the very best for the pupils. They take their role as 'critical friend' very seriously, for example, through questioning the good quality information provided for them by the headteacher on pupil performance. They also have a very good understanding of the work of the school through their regular, planned monitoring visits. In the words of one staff member, the governors are not 'faceless people', but true partners with staff in the education process. Governors use their individual expertise well. For example, the chair of the finance committee is a former head of a secondary school and is well placed to advise on how money might best be used to support the school's priorities. A strong feature of the governing body is its close connections with the village at many different levels. This enables governors to have a real 'feel' for what the community wants from the school and vice-versa.
59. Financial planning and monitoring are good. The governors make effective use of the local education authority finance department to ensure they have the best advice on which to base their strategic planning. A very close eye is kept on spending, and funds are carefully earmarked to support long-term projects, such as increasing staffing and ensuring the new building is kept in excellent condition. Grant funding is used effectively, for example to improve ICT and employ classroom assistants to provide extra support for pupils with special educational needs and others who need extra help. The high quality support given to these pupils indicates that the money is spent well. The school effectively seeks best value for the money it spends through comparing its performance with similar small schools, checking the prices of the goods and services it purchases and consulting informally with parents.
60. The school secretary is very efficient and carries out her day-to-day financial management duties very well. She is a welcoming and helpful first point of contact with the school. She gives very good support to the headteacher and staff to enable them to carry out their work with the minimum of interruption.
61. At the last inspection, the former school building was judged to be inadequate for the full delivery of the curriculum. This has been totally turned around by the move to the new building in 2000. Staff, pupils, parents and governors are highly delighted with their new school and the way in which it has improved learning opportunities for the pupils. The facilities for physical education both indoors and out have improved significantly and are a strong feature in the improvement in standards. The facilities for pupils with special educational needs are excellent. The accommodation is of a very high standard, due to the diligence and persistence of the headteacher, staff and governors, who were closely involved in its design. They were very determined to get this right from the outset. They are committed to ensuring that the building continues to meet the needs of the pupils as effectively as possible, as numbers

increase. Consequently, they have set money aside to build a covered veranda extension to the infant classroom to extend the area available for sand, water and creative development. The building is kept scrupulously clean and maintained to a very high standard. Learning resources are good, overall. The library provides a very good resource and is another significant improvement as a result of the move to the new building. It is well stocked, with a good range of well-organised fiction and non-fiction texts. ICT resources are continually being developed through the well-planned use of specific grant funding.

62. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Very strong leadership and management and good teaching have brought about improvements in standards. The school adds significant value in the way it cares for its pupils and develops them as well-rounded individuals. Parents place a high value on its work. The school is therefore judged to give good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. In order to further improve standards, the headteacher, staff and governors should now:

(a) Improve aspects of provision for reception pupils by:

- Providing more opportunities for outdoor and creative play
- Ensuring a better balance between the input given by the teacher in group activities and that given by support staff
- Ensuring a better balance between teacher directed and child initiated activities, particularly in physical and creative development.

(paragraphs 4, 5, 18, 29, 65 - 77)

(b) Improving standards of handwriting and presentation by:

- Teaching handwriting skills more regularly and systematically
- Ensuring consistency between the classes with regard to expectations
- Introducing the beginnings of cursive writing and introducing the use of pen at an earlier stage
- Ensuring that teachers model the chosen handwriting style in their marking, on prepared sheets and on the board

(paragraphs 5, 24, 85)

The headteacher, staff and governors may also wish to consider including the following minor issue within their action plan:

- Improve the opportunities for pupil to develop their understanding of life in a multi-cultural society

(paragraph 38)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	1	14	3	0	0	0
Percentage	0	6	78	17	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than 5 percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	48
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	20

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	8.9
National comparative data	5.6

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
47	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	86

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
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Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	125,795
Total expenditure	112,867
Expenditure per pupil	2351
Balance brought forward from previous year	25,135
Balance carried forward to next year	39,893

Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	48
Number of questionnaires returned	35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	20	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	37	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	37	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	51	37	11	0	0
The teaching is good.	71	23	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	34	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	91	9	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	26	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	80	20	0	0	0

The school is well led and managed.	86	11	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	20	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	43	9	0	0

Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and may not total 100.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

64. Provision for the reception children has improved in several key areas since the last inspection. The move to the new building has enhanced the opportunities for children to develop their physical, creative and social skills because there is now more space, both inside and out. The school has worked particularly hard to provide effectively for these pupils within a mixed age class. In some instances, reception pupils benefit from being taught alongside the Year 1 and 2 pupils, for example, in the shared parts of the literacy and numeracy lessons. However, there are some occasions when this limits their opportunities to explore and investigate through play. For example, children are sometimes unable to have free access to a range of creative activities because of the needs of the older pupils in the class and the space available. Good opportunities are in place for parents to be involved in their children's learning from the start, for example, through helping them develop reading skills. A very good feature is the quality of the weekly home / school information sheets and reading diaries, which provide a very useful link between school and home. These ensure that parents are very well informed about what their children are learning in school, how they are progressing in each area of learning and how they can help their children to improve.
65. Children achieve well during their time in reception. The overall attainment on entry to school varies widely within each year group and year on year. The attainments of the current reception class on entry, while still covering a wide range were broadly typical of pupils of this age. Assessment information and children's work indicates that all children are on course to reach the levels expected, known as the early learning goals, in their writing, their physical and their creative development. By the end of the reception year most pupils are likely to exceed the levels expected in their personal development, their reading and speaking skills, their mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.
66. Teaching is good overall, with particular strengths in the quality of relationships, the high expectations of children's behaviour and the teaching of reading. However, on a few occasions, the pupils would benefit from more direct attention from the class teacher when they are undertaking group tasks. Sometimes, progress is not as sharp because the teacher's attentions are focused on the older ones for a greater percentage of the time. Children are very well cared for and the provision for those with special educational needs is particularly good. The assessment of children's learning is of good quality and teachers and support staff have a very clear knowledge of what each child has achieved. Information gained from assessing their learning is used effectively to pinpoint the next learning steps for each child.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. Teaching is good and children achieve well. They come into school happily and have already developed very good attitudes to learning. Routines are clear and this leads to a secure and predictable environment, where relationships are very positive. Teachers and classroom assistants achieve just the right balance between helping and supporting pupils and encouraging them to look after themselves. For example, they change their shoes independently and get changed for swimming with the minimum of help. They benefit in these situations from the good models provided by the older pupils in the class. They also respond positively when taught with the other pupils, having learned to listen and wait until it is their turn to speak. For example, in literacy sessions, they have learned to put their hands up to answer questions in the shared part of the lesson. Most have developed an understanding of the need to follow rules and take account of the needs of others.
68. A range of well-planned activities provides good opportunities for children to learn to work both independently and in small groups. As a result, almost all have developed good concentration.

Communication, language and literacy

69. By the end of the reception year, almost all children achieve the expected goals in this area and most are on course to exceed these levels in reading. Teaching is good, overall, but better in reading than in writing. Children have learned to listen attentively. Occasionally, in literacy lessons shared with the Year 1 and 2 pupils, reception children are expected to listen to adults for too long. As a result, although the concentration skills of the majority are good for pupils of this age, their attention wanders. Most pupils describe what they see and understand, clearly and confidently. For example, after a visit to the farm they were able to describe in good detail the route they had taken to 'Boris the Bat', a puppet who had lost his way.
70. Reading skills develop well because they are taught effectively through a systematic programme of teaching letter sounds and blends. Phonic skills are taught effectively every day and, as a result, most children already recognise a number of letters and know the sounds they make. Children are actively encouraged to learn about books and to listen and respond to stories from the earliest stages. They learn to see themselves as readers because they have good access to books and take them home regularly to share with their parents, as well as sharing them daily with staff in school. Good assessment procedures ensure that each child is introduced to the books in the school's reading scheme as soon as they are ready. As a result, all are now able to read the stories in their small reading books and use the pictures to help with meaning. Progress in writing is not quite as sharp. Written work in their books indicates that most children can now write words and simple phrases without adult help. More able children are confident in writing independently. However, others would benefit from more opportunities to 'have a go' at writing for themselves, for example as part of their role-play.

Mathematical development

71. Most of the children are on course to exceed the expected learning goals and teaching in this area is good. The skills of counting and adding are taught well. The teacher ensures that in the part of the daily lessons shared with the older children, the needs of the reception pupils are well catered for. However, they often benefit through being taught with the older children because many respond well to the level

of challenge this provides. As a result, their mental arithmetic strategies are developing well. Children are also provided with interesting practical activities. For example, they followed an 'obstacle course' to help them learn the language of position, such as right, left, forward, before working with a programmable floor robot. However, pupils' progress was slower in this part of the lesson than it had been in the shared session because initially the instructions were not sufficiently clear for them.

72. Work in books indicates that most of the children are working reliably with numbers to 10 and some beyond this. They can count on and back to add and subtract and can answer questions such as '1 more than 8' and '1 less than 9'. They can also match nine objects to the correct number and sort objects, such as plastic animals, by colour and size with ease. Most also have good recognition of basic shapes, such as circle, triangle and square. The more able pupils can also recognise more complex shapes, such as a hexagon.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

73. Teaching in this area of learning is good. The activities provided are stimulating and interesting. For example, children explored what would happen when different amounts of sand and water were mixed together. Good opportunities were taken to develop children's use of language, when the classroom assistant and children discussed why the sandcastle made with the dry sand fell apart and the one made with damp sand stuck together for much longer. Powers of observation were developed well. The more able pupils noticed that as the damp sand dried out, this castle also crumbled. They also worked out that dry sand was easier to pass through a sieve because it did not clump together.
74. With their imaginations fired by a visit to a local farm, two children worked together with great concentration in their 'small world' play, as they arranged the cows in the barn. They had taken careful note of their journey from school to the farm and produced plans showing a good range of landmarks. A very able pupil worked on the same task as the older pupils, labelling his plan and identifying features such as 'cattlegrds' and 'frmhose'. All reception pupils are confident in using the computer to support their learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. They can use the mouse to choose from a menu and to select and move objects on the screen. They have also produced their own computer pictures using 'paint and draw' tools.

Physical development

75. Most children are likely to achieve the expected learning goals in this area, including manipulative skills, such as handwriting and the use of scissors. Appropriate attention is given to teaching basic skills, such as how a pencil should be held and the best way to use a paintbrush. Children are given some opportunities to use wheeled toys outdoors, but these could be more frequent. There is currently no outdoor apparatus for pupils to explore climbing, balancing and sliding, but the school has firm plans to address this in the very near future. Children have access to the school hall for a range of physical activity lessons. They benefit from observing the skills of the older pupils and working alongside them. They also benefit from weekly swimming lessons and are all very confident in the water. Their skills in this area are better than usually found.

Creative development

76. Children are on course to meet expectations in this area by the end of the reception year. They have regular opportunities to take part in music lessons with the older pupils and to use an appropriate range of media, such as paint, 'play dough' and recycled modelling materials. They also have access to construction kits and work together well, building models. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in role-play. During the inspection, children were using the 'Chinese House' to conduct tea ceremonies, as in a book they had been sharing. They donned the appropriate garments and very carefully and solemnly served the tea to 'guests', sitting on cushions on the floor. Often, however, creative activities are directed too closely by the teacher and give pupils few opportunities to choose and explore for themselves. Sharing the classroom with the older pupils sometimes makes this more difficult for teachers to organise.

ENGLISH

77. Standards in the national tests in English at the end of both key stages vary greatly year on year because of the small number of pupils and the varying percentages of pupils with special educational needs in each year group. However, the general trend in English has been one of improvement since the last inspection. St. Mary's has improved at a slightly faster rate at both key stages than in the majority of schools nationally. The schools own comprehensive records show that the vast majority of pupils achieve well during their time at the school, in relation to their starting points. The few exceptions to this picture are usually pupils who have joined the school part way through. This was the case with half of last year's Year 6 pupils. In the current Year 6, standards are below average because 3 out of the 4 pupils are identified as having special educational needs in the areas of reading and writing. Standards in the current Year 2 group are broadly average. There is good evidence that standards in some year groups are above average. For example, the current Year 5 group is on course to reach above average standards in next year's tests. Boys and girls achieve equally well in most year groups. In Year 1, some boys with concentration difficulties are achieving at a slower pace than anticipated. The school has recognised this and put extra support into place to address the situation. This is having a good impact and their progress is accelerating.
78. Improvements in progress have been brought about, in part, through the implementation of the national literacy strategy, which has increased teachers' skills and ensured that pupils can build progressively on their previous learning. Good systems for tracking pupils' progress and analysing test results have enabled the school to identify areas for improvement much more sharply and introduce measures to deal with these. For example, spelling was identified as a whole school issue and strategies implemented to ensure thorough and systematic teaching. This has led to measurable improvements throughout the school. Assessment is also used much more effectively to identify the next steps in learning for pupils and involve them in setting future targets for improvement.
79. Throughout the school, pupils build well on their speaking and listening skills. The majority converse confidently with adults and also with other pupils. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts and ideas, for example, when discussing the lives of the ancient Egyptians in history, or taking part in circle time. In mathematics, pupils confidently explain the strategies they have used to work out answers and to describe number patterns they have identified. In the literacy hour, pupils are given the opportunity for choral speaking, which develops their understanding of using their voices for effect, for example, when reading poetry. Older, more confident pupils are able to present their findings clearly and coherently

to the class, as seen when they shared their research into plants in science. Other pupils speak clearly when reading out loud in assembly, taking good account of the audience. Throughout the school, listening skills develop well because staff have high expectations of pupils in this area. Any minor 'lapses' are dealt with firmly. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are less confident are very well supported and encouraged by the classroom assistants. For example, in an infant geography lesson, one child beamed with pride after she had contributed the term 'reservoir' to the list of features about the local area they were compiling. The classroom assistant had sensitively encouraged her to 'have a go'.

80. Progress in reading is good throughout the school. This is due to a strong emphasis on teaching basic reading skills from the earliest stages. Pupils in the infant classes and those with particular difficulties receive a high level of support from both teachers and classroom assistants. Parents are encouraged to support their children at home. The school provides training for them and shares information through the reading diaries that pupils take home with their reading books. These are diligently completed by parents and are a very useful link between home and school. Pupils develop an enjoyment of reading through the interesting stories they are introduced to in their literacy lessons and through events such as 'World Book Day' when all the pupils and staff celebrated their love for books by dressing up as their favourite characters. By the end of Key Stage 1, the majority read with good expression and developing fluency. The teacher ensures that reading strategies, such as predicting what might happen next, are made explicit. Letter sounds and blends are taught effectively in an enjoyable and challenging way, often through use of 'game' formats. As a result, most pupils become confident at working out unfamiliar words. The more able pupils, in particular, can accurately predict what might happen next in the stories they read, based on what has gone before. Most Year 2 pupils understand what context and index pages in information books are for and can use them to find out facts for themselves.
81. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' research skills are well developed, using both books and computers. However, their skills at summarising the information they find and writing it in their own words are less secure. Older pupils are proficient at using the cataloguing system to find the books that they need in the attractive, well-stocked library that is a key improvement brought about by the move to the new building. Most pupils in the Year 5 class are proficient readers, who read with fluency and expression. They can discuss their likes and dislikes with confidence and the more able can identify the characters' motives and predict what might happen next from events that have gone before. Pupils in Year 6 who have reading difficulties have developed a good range of strategies for overcoming their problems. They work hard, persevere and are confident in reading to adults because of the very good support and encouragement they receive. Their efforts are always praised and valued.
82. The school has recognised, through analysis of test results, that pupils' writing skills do not always develop as quickly as their reading skills. As a result, writing has been identified as a priority area and staff have received training. There is evidence of improvement in both the infant and junior classes. Writing is taught well in shared and guided group sessions. Year 2 pupils are writing independently. They punctuate sentences and spell a good range of words with good levels of accuracy. The most able sometimes use speech marks and exclamation marks in their stories. They are beginning to understand that they can improve on their work through revising and editing it, for example to make it more interesting. Some Year 1 pupils find independent writing difficult and the teacher is tackling this by making good use of

group guided writing sessions. In one lesson observed, she discussed and modelled the writing process very skilfully with the pupils. As a result, the pupils wrote some lively and interesting sentences about animals, such as, 'I looked through my window and what did I see? A green grass snake and he spied me!' Junior pupils are taught the different features of the various text types. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils' are able to identify rhyming patterns in poetry, such as couplets. They then use such features to enliven their own writing. Year 5 and 6 pupils write for a good range of purposes and audiences. For example, they have written reports, diaries and letters of complaint. They understand that a good story opening grabs the reader's attention. One Year 5 pupil set the scene for her mystery story by writing, 'It was a sunny day at St. Hubert's Lane. The rooftops were shimmering in the sunlight.'

83. Pupils in both key stages are given appropriate opportunities to write in other subjects and the school is currently developing this area. For example, the more able pupils in Year 1 have recorded work about homes independently. One child wrote, 'My house is new because I just moved in.' However, the same pupils are not given such good opportunities in geography, where worksheets are used that often require the pupils to colour or to fill in one or two words. This does not make best use of their literacy skills. At Key Stage 2, pupils have written their own myths and legends in response to the topic about the Ancient Greeks in history. Year 3 pupils have written 'first-hand' accounts, as though they were slave traders. Growing use is also being made of ICT to present written work and to reinforce basic skills such as spelling and reading.
84. Standards in handwriting are a weaker area and are below average at both key stages. The school has recognised this and has recently introduced a scheme to help bring about improvements. However, this is not yet used consistently. Staff place varying levels of emphasis on the importance of neatly presented work during lessons and in their marking. There were very few occasions when pupils were given explicit instructions about the neatness and presentation of their work, although in the infant class there are cards on the tables which show good posture for writing and how to hold a pencil. In the junior class, there are one or two examples on the wall to show what well presented work looks like. However, these were seldom referred to either by the teacher or the pupils during the lessons observed. There was also little evidence of regular, systematic handwriting practice in the junior class. As a result, in most pupils' books, letters are poorly formed and inconsistently joined and work is often untidy. The rudiments of joined writing and the use of pen are introduced far too late and pupils have little incentive to improve this aspect of their work. Teachers' marking and their work on the board or on prepared sheets does not always follow one recognised style, which limits its effectiveness as a model for the pupils.
85. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for and make good progress. Individual work programmes set very clear targets for them. These are broken down into small, achievable steps. As a result, teachers and support staff plan work for them which closely meets their needs. The classroom assistants who work with them give these pupils very good support. They often reinforce the key points of the lesson and encourage pupils to attempt tasks independently, thereby raising their self-esteem. They are very conscious of the need to develop pupils' independence and prevent them becoming over reliant on support. As a result, pupils are enabled to take a full part in lessons. National 'catch up' programmes are being used effectively to accelerate the progress of pupils who find reading and writing difficult. For example, some boys in Year 1 with particular difficulties are now

making rapid progress as a result of taking part in a programme designed for pupils of this age.

86. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers are particularly skilled at planning work to closely match the needs of the wide range of abilities and age groups within their classes. They know the pupils' capabilities very well and as a result, challenge them effectively. For example, in the shared part of an infant lesson, the challenge was systematically stepped up for the older and more able pupils, as they were investigating the different letter blends that made the sound 'ai'. Teachers use questions well to draw out what pupils already know and build on this. Most sessions begin with questions such as, 'What were we learning about in the last lesson?' In a junior shared reading session, the pupils had to draw on their previous learning to answer the question, 'Why did I whisper that last section?' Teachers are good at tailoring their questions to match the varied ability levels within the class. This results in good learning for all. Teachers manage their pupils very well and have very good relationships with them. Consequently, most pupils get down to work very quickly and work with effort and enthusiasm because they want to please their teachers. They have high expectations of the amount of work pupils will complete and of their behaviour. In a junior lesson, tasks were timed and this gave a sense of urgency to pupils as they worked. Many pupils, and in particular some of the boys, responded really well to this. Strategies, such as using games and investigations for more 'routine' tasks, also engages pupils' interest and ensures they enjoy their work. Teachers also make very good use of marking to pinpoint the next learning steps for pupils and help them to improve.
87. The subject is led and managed very effectively by the headteacher. She has ensured consistency of teaching through her own monitoring and through engaging others to assist her in the task. For example, she has used the expertise of other headteachers from the local small schools' cluster group in analysing pupils' work. She has used the services of the local education authority adviser to ensure her own teaching is monitored and has taken action as a result. She keeps a close eye on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils through the comprehensive tracking procedures in place and ensures that any issues identified are swiftly dealt with. As a result, pupils receive the support that they need to help them achieve well. The headteacher has worked very closely with governors to ensure that the right levels of classroom support are provided and effectively deployed. This is having a significant impact particularly on those pupils with special educational needs.

MATHEMATICS

88. There have been improvements in mathematics since the last inspection. Pupils now achieve well throughout the school, in relation to their previous attainment. Standards have improved slightly faster than nationally, at both key stages. Those pupils with special educational needs receive very good help and this enables them to make good progress. They are included in all elements of lessons and this helps them to gain in confidence. Boys have performed better than girls in the Key Stage 1 tests over the last four years. This reflects their abilities and no differences were observed during the inspection. In the junior class, the girls and boys have achieved equally well in the past and continue to do so. There is good subject leadership, with assessment being effectively used to raise standards. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented successfully. This is evident in the clear learning objectives that ensure consistent progression, lesson on lesson, the wide range of effective teaching strategies employed to teach the mixed age classes and the

flexible strategies and good levels of mental agility shown by the pupils when they undertake mental calculations.

89. In the current, very small Year 2 group, standards are slightly below average. Almost all the pupils are working up to the level expected for their age but none are reaching the higher level. However, the work set for them is challenging and varied. Each lesson contains a good blend of skills practice for reinforcement and new concepts being introduced. For example, in one lesson observed, Year 2 pupils reviewed their work on right angles and were introduced to the new concept of co-ordinates, to locate features on a simple plan. This ensured that they built well on their previous learning and also further developed their understanding. The class teaching sessions at the start and end of each lesson are particularly effective in enabling all pupils to participate at their own individual ability levels. For example, a Year 1 pupil, when asked to explain how she had mentally worked out the answer to $6 + 7$, replied, 'I knew that two sevens are 14, so then I took one away.' Pupils also have regular and appropriate opportunities to undertake practical activities. These are usually carried out as part of work in other subjects, such as science and design and technology to ensure the skills are not learned in isolation and that pupils see the relevance of what they are learning. For example, pupils weighed the ingredients to make pizza dough and used their understanding of how three-dimensional shapes are constructed to design pizza boxes.
90. In the current Year 6 group, three-quarters of the pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs and have learning difficulties. As a result of good teaching and support, almost all pupils are working to the average level, though none are expected to reach an above average level by the end of the school year. This places standards for this group below the national average. Pupils in some other year groups, for example, the current Year 5 pupils are reaching above average standards. In lessons, pupils work well within two groups, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. Learning is broken down even further within these groups. This ensures that pupils are set challenges that are well matched to their abilities. For example, some are encouraged to work out calculations in their heads. Others, who need to do so, use whiteboards to work them out. Classroom support assistants encourage and help pupils with special educational needs to give answers in the class discussions. More able pupils often benefit from working alongside older classmates. As a consequence, pupils listen keenly, work hard and show enthusiasm for the subject. Computers are being increasingly used, for example to produce graphs and to support learning of skills such as identifying number patterns. They could be used more effectively on occasions to extend the opportunities for older, more able pupils to develop their mathematical thinking still further.
91. The quality of the teaching is good. It is especially strong in catering for the high proportion of pupils with special needs in the school. Individual programmes for many of these pupils contain specific goals to help them make good progress in mathematics. Lessons begin with the objectives being explained – 'This is what you will learn today'. At the end of the lesson, the class regroups to check how well these objectives have been achieved. These discussions help pupils to gain a clear picture of their learning. The teaching of basic skills is good. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their mental skills and to learn about number operations and processes. There have been improvements in developing pupils' problem solving techniques. Weekly challenges are set to extend the work beyond the set lessons. Pupils are regularly challenged to solve number problems. However, they have fewer opportunities to use and apply their skills in problems related to space, shape and measurement. Every opportunity is taken to praise the pupils. This raises their

confidence and makes them want to participate. This skilled, instant evaluation is the first layer of the good assessment procedures. Marking in pupils' books is based on close analysis. Errors are often used to teach and extend the pupils' understanding. A very strong feature of the assessment is the weekly summary sheet that informs parents of their child's progress in key subjects and any areas for development. Older pupils often contribute to these, making comments about their own progress. Test results are carefully examined to note areas in need of improvement. Accurate records enable the progress of each child to be monitored. They also allow targets to be set at the right level for each child. Pupils are aware of their targets and are closely involved in monitoring their own progress towards them.

92. As a pilot school for the National Numeracy Strategy, good foundations were laid early on and these have continued to be developed. Leadership in the subject is good. Weaknesses are identified and strategies introduced to improve standards. For example, problems of teaching the numeracy hour to a class containing up to four separate year groups have been overcome through improved planning and assessment.

SCIENCE

93. Standards in science have risen since the previous inspection when they were judged to be below average. Standards have risen faster than the national trend. More pupils have subsequently reached average and above average levels. This represents good achievement throughout the school. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. This enables them to make good progress. There is no significant difference between the performances of girls and boys. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been broadly average in the years since the last inspection. In the current Year 2 group, standards are in line with those nationally. Most of the current Year 6 pupils will reach the expected level. However, overall standards in science will be below the national average in this very small year group because there are no pupils on course to achieve the higher level.
94. Improvements in the subject are due to a number of factors. There is now a much higher percentage of practical and investigative work provided for pupils. This captures their interest and stretches their thinking. In the investigations, pupils are increasingly being expected to use their thinking skills, to make predictions and to draw conclusions. Improvements in assessing and tracking pupils' progress ensure that they achieve well in acquiring knowledge and understanding. It also ensures that all areas of the subject are covered adequately. Information and communication technology is now used more frequently in the subject and takes the learning of pupils to new levels of interest and awareness.
95. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. In the infant class there is a strong emphasis on practical investigation. Pupils learn by doing. They look through a magnifier and have glimpses into a new world of perception. As the teacher noted in one pupil's book, 'You noticed the fly's wings had veins'. They taste foods, note the effects of magnets on metals and study 'forces' through testing the 'pushes and pulls' used on different toys. They draw their own conclusions, such as when writing, 'A shadow is a black thing that reflects from the sun. The sun cannot get through it so it makes a shadow'. Pupils of all abilities achieve well because they are suitably challenged to think. By Year 2, they pose their own questions. 'Is the material flexible?' 'Will it bounce?' They even begin to make predictions that can be tested through accurate experimentation. They enjoy their work.

96. This good rate of progress continues into Years 3 and 4. Measuring becomes more precise. For example, when checking how a shadow grows in relation to a light source (a torch) Year 3 pupils discovered, 'It got bigger by two centimetres each time we moved the trolley 5 centimetres forwards.' Pupils begin to develop an understanding of what constitutes a 'fair' test. This helps them when discussing together how to devise an experiment that can be expected to prove something. In Years 5 and 6, intellectual challenges increase as studies begin to centre more on complex areas of ideas and concepts. Learning presents a greater challenge for the pupils. For example, when studying solids, liquids and gases there was a greater emphasis on instruction and less on experimentation. As a consequence, levels of understanding, seen in pupils' work, dropped. However, when set a more direct, investigational challenge, to dissect a tulip and locate its male and female organs, learning suddenly blossomed. The studies were much enhanced by the use of digital microscopes connected to each computer. Investigations suddenly entered the realms of the spiritual, as an image came into focus on the monitor screen to cries of, 'Wow, that's beautiful!'
97. The teaching of the enquiry skills of science is good. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. The subject leader has promoted this key element well, throughout the school. This has been the most improved aspect and the school has successfully adapted a national scheme for teaching science. All other elements of the subject, life processes, materials and their properties and the physical processes of science, are now delivered systematically, knowledgeably and enthusiastically. Lessons are carefully planned and work is set to meet the different ages, and the range of ability levels, represented in each class. Especially strong is the commitment of the school to include every pupil in each lesson and overcome barriers to learning. Very good help is provided to ensure that this aim is well realised. The use of lesson objectives to inform the pupils, at the outset of the lesson, as to what they will be taught is used well. Lesson endings are equally well exploited to check, for example, if the evidence obtained validated the pupils' own predictions. Such discussions enable pupils to be better aware of their own learning. Scientific language is well extended both through discussions as well as informative displays. This was a feature when pupils learned about, then examined carefully, the different parts of a flower. By the end of the lesson, pupils were well aware of the names of each part. Resources in the subject are good and help to promote better learning. For example, CD-ROMs and the Internet now allow pupils opportunities to develop their studies into broader areas of investigation. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' attitudes and behaviour and these are invariably realised. Pupils take their work seriously and are keen to develop their skills.
98. Leadership in the subject is good. Issues for improvement raised in the previous report have been successfully resolved. Resources for the subject have been much enhanced and the school development plan identifies the right areas in need of improvement. The school has become much more self-evaluative in its drive towards continuous improvement in the subject.

ART AND DESIGN and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

99. In art and design and in design and technology, standards are similar to those seen in most schools. Standards are slightly higher in design and technology because the process of creating and developing is better established. Sketchbooks are used for both subjects but the process of design-make-evaluate-amend is more clearly seen in design and technology. This represents an improvement on the findings of the

previous inspection. By Year 2, the production of vehicles with steering wheels is guided by plans labelling the component parts. By Year 6, pupils make thorough plans and effectively evaluate the work undertaken. For example, having produced a purse, one pupil's summary included the exasperated comment, 'I found the cross stitch easy once we got going because it was relaxing, except when you had to thread the needle!' The sketchbooks are not used quite as well in art and design to experiment and to develop ideas in preparation for a finished product. However, there are some examples of exciting work being undertaken, such as the sketches produced in Years 1 and 2 of machine parts from car engines following a profitable visit to a local garage.

100. Pupils greatly enjoy the work and describe in detail how they made objects such as torches, lighthouses, slippers and Venetian masks. The school makes good provision for food technology. Pupils not only design their own savouries, such as sandwiches and pizzas; they also package and market them. 'Glue stick is a luxurious biscuit. The chocolate coating is so creamy it will stick your lips together – and it's only 65p.' I feel certain some might be tempted by the offer! Art is used well to develop the pupils' awareness of other cultures. When looking at different sculptures, one Year 2 pupil correctly identified a carving as an African drummer, carrying an instrument similar to one played in the music lessons. Pupils also worked on a Japanese theme creating lanterns and willow-pattern designs for their 'Tea-House' corner. A feature of the lesson seen was the total concentration demonstrated by the pupils, many working independently and all choosing to stand, without any prompting, to allow themselves greater freedom of movement. Good resources were well used and very well shared. Levels of co-operation were high. Pupils were keen to discuss their work and showed much appreciation for the work of others. However, pupils in Year 6 have not benefited fully from the current curriculum; they have some gaps in their knowledge. For example, they do not have as strong knowledge of painters and their styles as do pupils in the lower age groups.
101. The teaching for infant pupils was good. In the one lesson seen, they were given a wide range of challenges, some ongoing, some new. The lesson was thoroughly planned, with support assistants well briefed. Good discussions, at the beginning and end of the lesson, helped pupils to learn and to consolidate their understanding. Very good provision was made for pupils with special educational needs and they were encouraged to experience work in a range of construction materials. Leadership in both subjects is enthusiastic and sound. The adequate resources are well maintained. Good coverage, in both subjects, is maintained with the scheme of work, introduced since the previous inspection, giving good progression of skill development.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

102. Standards in history and geography at both key stages are similar to those found in most schools. This is an improvement in geography at age 11 since the last inspection.
103. Better standards in geography and better progress for pupils in both subjects have been brought about through improvements to the curriculum. National and local subject guidance is now used to plan the learning experiences to ensure that pupils build progressively on their skills from year to year. These guidelines have been carefully and effectively adapted to meet the needs of pupils in mixed age classes. Plans and pupils' work are effectively monitored by the subject co-ordinators to

ensure that all aspects are covered in sufficient depth, that there is little repetition and that pupils are making the expected progress. The school has also worked hard to ensure that there is a good balance between teaching knowledge and skills. A more practical, investigative approach to learning in both subjects has been introduced since the last inspection. Good use is also made of the local area, of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school.

104. Pupils of all abilities in each year group are making good progress. The school works particularly hard to break down barriers to learning for those pupils with special educational needs. They are very well supported in lessons to enable them to deal with reading for research and recording their findings. For example, in a Key Stage 2 history lesson, pupils of different abilities helped each other to research information about the ancient Egyptians from books and the Internet. Classroom assistants ensured that those pupils with statements could take a full part in the lesson. Those of higher ability are also challenged effectively through being given good opportunities to research for themselves and to undertake work at the same level as those of higher ability. In a geography lesson for reception and infant pupils, for example, a particularly able reception year pupil was undertaking a similar task to pupils in Year 2.
105. Teaching in both subjects is good. Teachers plan well for the different ability levels. Good subject knowledge ensures that they are very clear about what they want pupils to learn and explain this well. Teaching is lively and animated. For example, in an infant geography lesson, pupils recalled the details of their walk to the nearby farm, through explaining the route to 'Boris the Bat', a puppet who was having great difficulty remembering the journey. Pupils were enthralled by this and very keen to point out where Boris was going wrong. As a result, they made very accurate plans of the journey themselves because they had remembered the route in detail. Resources were used well to fire the pupils' imaginations in a junior history lesson, as they examined Egyptian clothes and jewellery. In this lesson, questioning was used particularly well to help pupils draw conclusions, for example about why ancient Egyptians dressed as they did.
106. Computers are used well in both subjects for research and also to present work in different ways. For example, pupils had written Greek myths and legends on the computer, making good use of both their ICT and their literacy skills.
107. The co-ordinators lead and manage the subjects well. They have effectively identified key priorities for future improvement. For example, they intend to exchange classes in order to monitor learning in the different key stages in greater depth.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Standards are broadly similar to those found in most schools at both key stages, as they were at the last inspection. However, the school has done well since then in keeping abreast with changes in schools' nationally. It has ensured development of the subject, by implementing national subject guidance and using grant funding wisely to provide staff training and up-to-date resources. A good system for tracking pupils' progress has been introduced and ensures that teachers have a clear idea of the next steps in learning for them. As a result, pupils make good progress in word processing and the use of the Internet for research and satisfactory progress in other areas. In addition, learning is accelerating as staff are becoming more confident with the newer programmes and resources. The developments have been brought about through the very good leadership and management of the subject by

the headteacher. She has set a very clear direction for work in ICT and has made very effective use of the small schools' cluster group to share good practice and jointly fund initiatives.

109. A developing aspect of the subject is the way that ICT is now planned as an integral part of learning in different subjects. Computers are regularly used in literacy and numeracy lessons, for example, to practise spelling, punctuation and number work. They are also used effectively to research and present information in history and geography and to monitor events in science. For example, junior pupils were using the computer-linked microscopes very effectively to identify the parts of flowering plants. This ensured that learning was first hand, exciting and challenging. Pupils gasped in wonder as they saw the flower heads magnified for the first time. Throughout the school pupils learn how to use other ICT tools, such as tape-recorders, programmable toys, and most recently, the digital camera. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of how computers are used in daily life.
110. Pupils in the infant class get off to a good start, building well on their experiences in reception. They make good progress in word processing. They learn to write their own sentences, using the various keyboard functions, such as the shift key and the caps lock and space bar. They know how to control the mouse to click on icons on the screen and can choose from a menu. They also learn how to move objects around the screen by 'dragging and dropping' and how to save and print their work with appropriate support. In one lesson observed, pupils were editing a given piece of text on the screen, adding adjectives to make it more interesting. This supported their literacy work as well as giving them the opportunity to practise their ICT skills. In this lesson, pupils with special educational needs were sensitively supported by the classroom assistant. This enabled them to achieve the same results as others in the class. Infant pupils have had appropriate opportunities to use the Internet to carry out research in history and geography. They have accessed the Sabden Village website to find out about their own village, past and present. Pupils have also created pictures using 'paint and draw' programmes and worked out short procedures to programme a floor robot. This linked well with their work on angles and direction in mathematics.
111. Pupils build well on the skills of word-processing and use of the Internet in the junior class and make steady progress in other areas. More able junior pupils are well challenged because they are encouraged to work independently. For example, in a science lesson, pupils were undertaking further research into plants when they had completed the main task. Junior pupils are competent at loading programmes and saving and retrieving their work from their individual files. They have good knowledge of the various keyboard and mouse functions and a good understanding of how to locate information. They have learned to use word processing facilities effectively, for example, to write stories, letters and poems. They often e-mail their parents to report on what they are doing and some also e-mail friends overseas. Different font sizes and colours have been used to add interest. Pictures, photographs and drawings have been added to their work. Pupils have also learned how to use spreadsheets to monitor events and have produced different types of graphs from data they have collected. This has provided a good link with work in mathematics. The understanding of how to control and monitor external events through ICT is less well developed. However, planning shows that this gap is scheduled to be filled later in the year, after staff have had training in using the programmable Lego the school has purchased. Typing skills at both key stages could be improved. Many pupils type slowly using one or two fingers and this slows them down, for example, when typing

their stories. The school has recognised this and has purchased materials and practice keyboards to help improve skills.

112. Throughout the school, pupils have very good attitudes to learning in ICT. They show good levels of independence. Pupils collaborate and co-operate with others very well. Junior pupils, in particular, often help each other. Pupils are very keen to demonstrate their skills.

MUSIC

113. In the lesson observed in the infant class, standards were above those seen and heard in most schools. Singing is a strength throughout the school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully included in the lessons enabling them to make good progress. Resources in the subject are good. They enhance the quality of both the listening and the performing. Music plays a significant part in extending the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.
114. During the lesson, pupils listened to some gentle Chinese instrumental music, 'Mu min xin ge'. One pupil thought she heard a nose flute being played. She had once heard one when on holiday. Next they listened to Tchaikovsky's 'Chinese Dance'. They weren't sure if this was Chinese music 'because it's too loud.' After some breathing exercises, 'Fill your lungs ready to blow up a big balloon', the pupils took turns singing a response song. First the class chorused, 'Where is Kai sitting today? There he is', to which the pupil sang, 'Here I am!' Most soloists responded with the same enthusiasm and confidence as their questioners. Various vowel exercises, such as 'May me mi mo mu' were sung, up and down a scale, to ensure that everyone listened and sang in tune. Other songs were then performed with melodies well sustained and with good diction. There was also good opportunity for some 'instrumental' playing. Pupils chose from a variety of everyday objects then, to the teachers conducting, they hit tins, scrunched paper and tapped bottles performing to a simple score. This was good quality learning and good fun! Although no music lessons were seen in the junior class, evidence points to standards at the age of 11 being at least at an average level. A teacher from the local authority music service takes these lessons. Pupils benefit from the full range of musical experiences outlined in a scheme of work that has been adapted well to the needs of the school. They sing rounds of up to four parts. Musical notation has been taught through class recorder playing lessons. This enables pupils to compose melodies, which they perform on a range of instruments.
115. Assemblies are enhanced by the high quality sound system that helps pupils to appreciate the music of famous composers and the music of other cultures. They sing the hymns and songs with expression and enthusiasm. They know the names of the instruments of the orchestra as well as a range of composers. The subject leader has only held this responsibility from the beginning of this school year. She has already had an impact on raising standards, especially in the lower school, and has the right priorities for future development. improving the assessment routines; and, developing closer links between music and other areas of the school's curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

116. Standards in swimming at the end of both key stages are better than usually found in primary schools. In gymnastics at the end of Key Stage 1, standards are broadly in line with those expected for pupils of this age. This is an improvement since the last

inspection, when overall standards in physical education were judged to be below the norm and progress was unsatisfactory. No other elements of the physical education curriculum were observed during the inspection. However, teachers' planning and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that throughout the course of the year, all elements are covered in sufficient depth.

117. Improvements since the last inspection have been mainly a result of the move to the new school building. This has ensured that there is sufficient room, both inside and out, to provide the appropriate learning experiences for the pupils. In addition, the subject has been well resourced with sufficient high quality equipment, which enables all to take part and motivates the pupils. The latest national guidelines for the subject have also been implemented and adapted to meet the needs of the school to enable pupils to build progressively on their skills. Pupils' experiences are also enriched through opportunities to take part in a range of sporting activities in the 'OK Club' and the football club run by parents. In addition, the school takes part in local sporting events, such as the annual small schools' swimming gala, in which it usually does well.
118. All pupils make very good progress in swimming, over time. This is because the whole school visits the local pool on a weekly basis and pupils become confident in the water from the earliest stages. In the swimming session observed, teaching was good overall and very good for the oldest and most able pupils. All staff follow a comprehensive programme of lessons with good levels of expertise and this ensures that pupils build quickly on their skills, learning a good range of strokes and developing the correct technique. By Year 6, pupils have exceeded the demands of the National Curriculum requirements for swimming. They have developed good levels of stamina and very good stroke technique for front crawl, back crawl and breaststroke, in particular. They are proficient at swimming over distance and confident in deep water, for example, when carrying out water safety exercises.
119. Infant pupils make steady progress in gymnastics, as a result of sound teaching. Younger pupils benefit from the example of older pupils, as they learn to balance on the wide and narrow beams and find ways of travelling along the parallel bars. In the lesson observed, the teacher had high expectations of pupils in terms of behaviour and the quality of their work. As a result, they strove to do their best and joined in readily with all activities. Those with special educational needs were given sensitive help and support by the classroom assistants to enable them to take part.
120. The subject is effectively led and managed by the co-ordinator. She ensures that National Curriculum requirements are met in full and evaluates the success of the scheme, through close liaison with colleagues.